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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000241

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UG](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: UGANDA/DRC: MUSEVENI AND KABILA DISCUSS OLT AND OIL

REF: 07 KAMPALA 1429

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a March 4 private meeting on their common border, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Congolese President Joseph Kabila agreed to strengthen bilateral relations in accordance with the Ngurdoto Accord reached in Tanzania in September 2007. We do not yet have the details of this private discussion, but Ugandan officials report that Kabila agreed to continue with Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT) against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There will be no public discussion of OLT deadlines in the future, but the heads of state will confer regularly. OLT is not mentioned in the communique, but the document underscores the need by both sides to maintain peace, security, and stability in the Great Lakes Region. Museveni updated Kabila on the status of Ugandan oil exploration and proposed joint oil exploitation on Lake Albert. The presidents then jointly addressed crowds that had gathered at the border to see them. The atmospherics were described as "excellent". It appears that both sides emerged from the meeting with what they needed for their domestic audiences, but we will wait to see if they follow through with implementation. End Summary.

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BACKGROUND
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¶2. (C) The highly anticipated meeting between the two presidents comes after weeks of speculation that President Kabila, for domestic purposes, would put an end to OLT. The speculation was spurred by Kabila's remarks in early February that foreign forces needed to leave DRC by the end of month. In mid-February, Ugandan Security Minister Amama Mbabazi and Chief of Defense Forces Aronda Nyariakima met with Kabila. They came away from the meeting believing that Kabila was supportive of OLT, but that he needed more assurances from the Government of Uganda (GOU) to dampen domestic criticism.

¶3. (C) GOU military, security, and foreign affairs officials expressed their concern that OLT was becoming hostage to Kabila's domestic problems and the rivalry between France and Belgium in Kinshasa. Museveni decided that it was important to find ways to help Kabila, particularly on the public relations front. The summit was one aspect of this. The GOU plans to put more information out in the public realm about the military operation to be publicized in Kinshasa and Juba. In addition, the Ugandan Peoples' Defense Forces (UPDF) has stepped up the pace of OLT operations, giving orders to commanders to actively engage LRA elements. UPDF units are near the two key leadership groups and captured a senior commander on March 3.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Kangumba, Director for Ring States at the Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and who worked on the communique, told P/E Chief that the Ugandans approached this meeting with Kabila in the same way it handled the meeting in

Arusha, Tanzania in September 2007 (ref A). In Arusha, Museveni emphasized the interconnected relationship between stability and economic development on both sides of the Ugandan-Congolese border. Museveni did not place emphasis on the LRA issue, but Kabila came to Arusha prepared to discuss the LRA and volunteered that he had plans to go after the "negative forces." Thus began the year-long dance which resulted in Kabila's agreement on the joint operations in November 2008. Based on this previous experience, Museveni decided that for this meeting, the best way to give Kabila political cover for OLT was to again focus on the importance of strengthening the bilateral relationship and the benefits for the Congolese of enhanced diplomatic, economic, and military cooperation.

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KABILA RECEIVES WARM WELCOME
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15. (C) By all accounts, Kabila's arrival at the Ugandan-Congolese border excited the crowds that had gathered to see the two presidents. Museveni and Kabila met alone in a tent pitched in the "no-man's land" between the borders for approximately one hour. (Note: Congolese security officials insisted that the meeting could not be in Uganda. End Note.) The two presidents emerged to jointly address the crowds on both sides of the border, with Kabila entering Uganda to do so. Museveni and Kabila told the crowds that they had pledged to deepen political, economic, and military ties, but that they were keeping the private discussions private. The atmospherics were "excellent" and both presidents were happy with the meeting, according to Kangumba. Kabila invited

KAMPALA 00000241 002 OF 003

Museveni to visit Kinshasa and Museveni accepted.

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OLT TO CONTINUE, OIL ISSUES DISCUSSED
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16. (C) Ambassador Kangumba gave the following read-out of the issues discussed. The communique re-commits Uganda and the DRC to strengthen bilateral cooperation diplomatically, economically, and militarily. The lack of mention of OLT was deliberate. The GOU felt that Kabila was under fire from his enemies for the secrecy around his decision to agree to joint operations, according to Kangumba. As a result, the communique says that Uganda and the DRC remain committed to the ensuring regional peace and security in accordance with the Great Lakes Security Pact (December 2006). (Note: The security pact commits neighboring countries to assist each other in eliminating negative forces. End Note.) The actual agreement on timelines for OLT would remain a private matter between Kabila and Museveni. LRA escapees and defectors report that LRA leader Joseph Kony adjusts his tactics based on approaching "deadlines." Discussing OLT's extension every three weeks was detrimental to the operation, not practical, and created unnecessary and damaging press speculation about OLT's progress, according to Kagumba.

17. (C) Museveni and Kabila agreed to place oil experts in their respective missions in Kampala and Kinshasa to facilitate the exchange of accurate information about the oil discoveries and production. Museveni had heard a number of rumors coming from the DRC on the status of Uganda's oil production and Ugandan intentions to "steal" Congolese oil. Museveni shared with Kabila the most recent information on Uganda's new oil finds, which exceeded previous expectations, and explained that they were made possible by stability on the Ugandan side of the border. Moreover, Museveni explained that the new finds were far inside Uganda's border making it unnecessary for Uganda to pump oil from underneath Lake Albert right away. Museveni felt it necessary to explain this because the Congolese advance team expressed fears that Uganda was far ahead of DRC on oil exploitation and could pump Congolese oil out from under the lake.

¶18. (C) Kangumba said that the Congolese officials left with a better understanding of Uganda's planned oil production. Museveni asked Kabila to consider joint exploitation of the oil in the lake to expedite progress on the Congolese side. He also reiterated Uganda's intention to sell excess electricity to eastern Congo once Ugandan production begins in 2010/2011.

¶19. (C) Both sides agreed to upgrade their diplomatic missions to full ambassadorial rank in one month, though Kangumba is skeptical and said he would wait and see if the Congolese follow through. (Note: In September 2007, the DRC agreed to approve Uganda's ambassadorial nominee by July 2008, which did not happen. Uganda's candidate has been waiting for approval since April 2008. End Note.)

FRENCH ANNOY MUSEVENI; U.S. GETS KUDOS

¶10. (C) The GOU was gripped with concerns that Kabila had developed cold feet in the days prior to the meeting. These fears were deepened when on March 3, French embassy officials in Kampala called Emmy Allio, the Deputy Director of the External Security Organization (ESO) and Museveni's point person on the LRA, and informed him that Kabila would not/not agree to an extension of OLT. As a result, the French officials said they would no longer share intelligence with the Ugandans if Kabila withdraws his support, according to Allio. The Ugandans went to the Belgian Defense Attache, Laurent Michaux, who reported just the opposite. Michaux reportedly told Allio that Kabila did support a continuation of the joint military operation and that the French had made the calculation that Kabila was on his way out and were supporting his enemies. These positions were reported up the chain to Museveni later in the day. Museveni reportedly said that the French could not be trusted and that the GOU did not need their information or "help" against the LRA, according to Allio. Emboffs contacted French Embassy officials after the meeting to find out if they will still work with the Ugandans. They French officials said they did not yet have a position.

¶11. (C) The French misstep highlights the positive role that the U.S. continues to play in the region. The USG, through Kampala, Kinshasa, and Washington worked with the GOU, GDRC, and UN Special Envoy Joachim Chissano's office to shore up Kabila's confidence in the operation in advance of the meeting. Allio passed us a message from Museveni saying that

KAMPALA 00000241 003 OF 003

the latter appreciates "the Ambassador and his staff for all they are doing to go after the LRA and forge close ties between Kabila and Uganda."

SENIOR LRA COMMANDER RETURNED TO UGANDA

¶12. (C) In other news, the UPDF flew captured LRA commander, Colonel Thomas Kwoyelo, back to Uganda. Kwoyelo, a top LRA commander, was injured in the stomach during a skirmish between the UPDF and LRA on March 3 north of Duru, DRC. Kwoyelo was in a small group conducting a patrol. He is receiving medical attention in a Kampala hospital. Initial news reports indicated that he would be tried for treason. However, we have since learned that President Museveni is adverse to keeping prisoners of war and is inclined to offer Kwoyelo amnesty to encourage other disgruntled senior commanders to surrender. Allio said that Kwoyelo will likely be treated well.

¶13. (C) Kwoyelo was serving in a position that will allow him to provide significant operational information to the Ugandans. Our DATT is in contact with the Chieftaincy of

Military Intelligence (CMI), who is debriefing Kwoyelo, who was a protege of executed LRA deputy leader Vincent Otti. After Otti's execution, Kwoyelo was one of several senior officers who were put under "house arrest," demoted, stripped of their weapons and satellite telephones, and placed under the command of officers less senior. He is known to the Ugandan services as being part of a "clique" of disgruntled senior officers. However, it appears that after the December 14 first strike, several of these officers were "rehabilitated" and given more responsibility.

¶14. (C) OLT Statistics to Date: UPDF reports that following casualties and rescuees since December 14, 2008: 346 Congolese, Ugandans, and southern Sudanese rescued. Sixty-seven LRA killed in action. Seven UPDF killed in action. Sixteen LRA characterized as prisoners of war. LRA spokesman David Matsanga's claims that the LRA holds 76 UPDF, Congolese, and southern Sudanese soldiers as prisoners of war are false. The UPDF challenged the LRA to produce them in public.

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COMMENT
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¶15. (C) On this side of the border, Ugandan officials are pleased with the results of the meeting between the two presidents on the issues of OLT and oil. The devil is always in the details and we will seek further information on the understanding reached on OLT between Museveni and Kabila. The GOU is less optimistic that there will be significant progress on other fronts, such as regular meetings of the Joint Permanent Commission working groups or the normalization of diplomatic relations. English text of the communique follow septel.
BROWNING